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STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, INR/NESA, L, INR/G

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [EPET](#) [PGOV](#) [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [SA](#) [AE](#)
SUBJECT: UAEG RE-DRAWNS ITS BORDER WITH SAUDI ARABIA

REF: 05 ABU DHABI 3851

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MICHELE J. SISON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) & (D)

11. (U) Ratcheting up its public stance on the border issue, the UAEG's 2006 Yearbook includes a map of the UAE with re-drawn borders with Saudi Arabia. In a departure from earlier yearbooks, the map (both hard copy and internet version) shows the UAE's territory extending to Qatar. The book devotes two paragraphs dealing with the territorial dispute with Saudi Arabia, noting that this was the first time that the UAE had publicly stated its 30 year position that the 1974 "provisional agreement signed between the two but not formally ratified" should be reviewed. The Yearbook quotes UAE MinState for Foreign Affairs Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed as saying, after a June 2005 visit by the Saudi Interior Minister, that "a brotherly, frank and transparent dialogue on certain boundary issues" had taken place, and that "the UAE said that some parts of the 1974 boundary agreement can no longer be implemented. The UAE, therefore presented fundamental amendments to these parts of the agreement. The UAE's stance in this respect is not new since the UAE has been expressing the same position since 1975.⁸

12. (U) The yearbook notes that a negotiated solution to the issue, which concerns mainly the southern border close to the UAE's Zarrara oilfield (Saudi Arabia's Shaybah field) and the Khor Al-Odaid area (the strip of land that would connect the UAE to Qatar), is being actively sought. Press reports say that the new map also includes changes to the UAE's southern border encompassing most of the al-Shaybah oil field, but the map is not detailed enough for Econoffs to determine whether the al-Shaybah field is actually shown in UAE territory. The oilfield currently produces 550,000 barrels a day of light crude oil exclusively for Saudi Aramco.

13. (C) Comment: Although the border dispute with the Saudis has been ongoing for years, the re-drawing of the map is a bold, overt statement and a marked departure from the UAE's usual tendency to avoid confrontational public statements. We understand that the negotiations with the Saudis have not been progressing well from the Emiratis' point of view, and this public airing may be their way of acknowledging their frustration -) similar to the way they have publicly complained about the Iranian occupation of Abu Musa and the Tunb islands. On January 10, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince, told Ambassador that border discussions with the Saudis were going well.⁸ He then said &of course, in our culture, when someone is sick we say things are going well up until the day the person dies.⁸ So far, the Saudi response to this public airing of the dispute appears to have been muted. Ministry of Information Advisor, Peter Hellyer (protect) told Econchief that the Saudis had requested copies of the new maps, but that this was the only reaction that he was aware of. End comment.

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